



**Federal Aviation
Administration**

FOCUSFAA

It's All About You

Issue 14 » October 11, 2005



Eye on Security	03
Surviving Katrina	06
Bayou Reflections	10
The Last Payday	13
Security Drive Changes	15
Payroll Shift Coming	16
ATO Job Fairs Are A Hit	18
Your Two Cents	20
Now This	25
AOA Highlights	27
Deviations	33

Eye on Security

IT WASN'T THE BEST TIME FOR PATRICIA LLOYD TO CHAT.

She was leading the effort to change the access and identification system at the Denver Tower, TRACON and Tactical Operations Center and 350 new ID cards had to be ready in a month. Her contractor help hadn't shown up, yet she made time to talk about her job as a security specialist at the Denver Technical Operations Center.

"Making time" could very well be the motto for this group of FAAers whose job it is to ensure that thousands of FAA facilities – staffed and un-staffed – are secure. There are about 90 security specialists who service the whole country, so it's easy to understand why their schedules are hectic.



Security employee screens an arrival to Kansas City Center.

The responsibilities of Lloyd and her coworkers are diverse, ranging from the simple, such as ensuring peepholes in facility doors, to the complex – developing security plans for major air traffic control centers. Along the way, they inspect and assess facility security, provide security briefings to facility managers, and investigate security incidents.

"We're providing them a whole lot more service than before Sept. 11, 2001," said Lloyd. "I help the smaller sites put their plans together. They appreciate that because it's time they don't have."

Eye on Security

Baseline security is determined by many factors, including the facility's importance to the National Airspace System, square footage, the number of employees, and crime or other threats in the facility's area.

While there are many technical aspects to their specialty, security specialists feel the real thrust of their jobs is something more tangible. "For me, it's more people and service," said Lloyd.

Milo Cantu, a specialist in the Southern Region, agreed. "You can be a good technical person, but if you can't deal with people, you can run into problems. You have to have both skills." Cantu noted he has to accommodate viewpoints from different lines of businesses and the unions.

Recent events have significantly changed their lives as security inspectors. September 11 was a defining moment. Karen Waller, a Central Region inspector, was called to Headquarters to support internal security

operations. "We were all on call for weeks, it seemed," she said.

For Dorothy Silvestri, a Central Region security specialist, who began working for FAA's security division on Sept. 10, 2001,

Sept. 11 proved a "very rude introduction to security." The terrorist attacks led Congress to beef up funding for facility security and mandate improvements. But prior to that, inspectors weren't always so welcome.

"[Facility managers] hated to see security coming," said

Silvestri. "We were the bad guys. We were looking for problems." But with funds to resolve problems, security specialists are finding themselves more welcome. "We looked like ticket writers before," said Bill Norton, facility security specialist at Headquarters. "Now we're ticket writers with the money to pay for them."

Lloyd brings signs and other little security "gifts" to help managers save time and money.



Patricia Lloyd

Eye on Security

Sometimes, she works a facility problem from the backend to resolve an issue before having to make an official report.

When external security employees from FAA moved to the Transportation Security Administration, it was a tumultuous experience. "We lost half of our office we interacted with on a daily basis. We lost half of our office space and our manager," recalled Waller. "Initially, there were a lot of uncertainties about who would have jobs, and where they would go," said Cantu.



Karen Waller (left), Dorothy Silvestri, and Chris Garcia (not pictured) make up the Central Region's facilities security staff.

But it also led to a refocus on internal security. "My first thoughts were we tended to take a back seat to the external [security] people," Silvestri recalled thinking after joining internal security. "I like it better now because the focus is on internal security and hazardous materials," said Waller.

Do they feel the weight of responsibility for protecting their coworkers? "It is on our shoulders," said Silvestri. "It's quite a responsibility if something goes wrong." Lloyd said her biggest fear is something happening inside a facility that was beyond her control. "If you think about it too hard, you might become paralyzed. You just have to do the job the best you can."

Cantu said, "You come away with a good feeling about what you're doing. You're playing a role. In today's environment, there's always going to be a focus on what we do." ✈

Surviving Katrina

“Two trucks came down Loyola Avenue in front of our hotel. One was a pick-up truck; the other was a military tractor trailer. And, I remember seeing people laying down in the back, and wondering why they weren’t sitting upright. Then it dawned on me, they were dead bodies. I didn’t dare tell my mother what I saw pass in front of us,” said Claudett Wiggins, staff assistant to the assistant administrator for aviation policy, planning, and environment.

Thursday, August 25 was an ordinary day for Wiggins. She, along with her husband, mother and great nephew, flew to New Orleans en route to attend a family reunion. Little did they know that their journey would result in what Wiggins now said is “an experience I wouldn’t wish on anyone.” On August 27, relatives reveled in the warmth of family, with little concern about the unwanted visitor just to their south — Hurricane Katrina.



Wiggins (left) with mother Pearlina Baker, sister Pearlina Baker, and great-nephew Justin McCrimmon

Surviving Katrina

“Knowing you have transportation and money and still can’t leave is a miserable feeling. We were totally helpless.”

“There was a lot of discussion as to what might happen, but we really weren’t too focused on it. My mom, who’s lived in New Orleans since 1948, was under the impression that it would be another of those storms that just blows over. No one thought it would come all the way,” said Wiggins.

But 24 hours later, Katrina morphed into a Category 5 storm with winds sustained at 175 mph and a barometric pressure that placed it among the five strongest storms ever in the Atlantic. By midday Sunday, the city’s mayor ordered mandatory evacuations.

Her husband wanted to leave, but first they had to pick up her mother, who lives near the 17th street levee. They were soon faced with a dilemma — they had a half tank of gas with no way to refuel and all the routes out of town were snarled. So the family did the only thing they could and decided to ride out the storm at the Holiday Inn Superdome.

“Knowing you have transportation and money and still can’t leave is a miserable feeling. We were totally helpless,” said Wiggins.

Surviving Katrina

For nearly 36 hours, Wiggins and her family took refuge in the hallways of the Holiday Inn, while the unrelenting wind and rampaging rain echoed and reverberated throughout the darkness. The hotel provided food and flashlights and tried to keep everyone informed. Tuesday morning, Wiggins woke up, looked out the window, and noticed water was coming into the city. That afternoon everyone was forced to vacate, as the hotel closed due to concerns about liability. The next stop was the Superdome.

“My mother has special medical needs, and so they put us in a special location on the first floor, which had air, lights, water, and working restrooms. Everyone else had to go to the second floor,” said Wiggins.

“Sewage was backing up with the flood waters, and was about ankle deep,” said Wiggins. “When I had to use the restroom, I did go up to the second floor and it was unbelievable. I couldn’t

use it because of the smell. There were no lights or flashlights. You didn’t know who or what was in there. The Superdome was wall-to-wall people. And it was 24-hour noise. There was just this feeling of uncertainty.”

As they began to evacuate the Superdome on Wednesday, Wiggins’ mother, sister, and great nephew were taken by ambulance to Baton Rouge. Wiggins and her husband were first flown to Houston, and later reunited with the rest of the family in Baton Rouge. After futile attempts to schedule a flight, Wiggins and her husband finally rented a car for the long drive back to Virginia.

“I had been through hurricanes as a child growing up in New Orleans, but never anything like this as an adult,” said Wiggins. “Once we got out and had the opportunity to see the news, that’s when it got frightening to see what we had been in. I thank God my husband was there with me.”

Surviving Katrina

Wiggins is also thankful that she was in New Orleans, because her mother would have been one of the many who were unable to leave their homes. One of their relatives who lived two blocks away from Wiggins' mother had to be rescued from his roof.

Relatives say that the front porch of her mother's house is gone, but the front half, the only part visible in the water, is still standing. Her mother and great nephew flew to Virginia in mid-September and are staying with Wiggins on a temporary basis. Despite it all, her mother plans to go back to New Orleans.

"She's 79 and she's lived there for nearly 60 years. My father built her home and she wants to go back. In a way I wish she wouldn't, but I'm not walking in her shoes," said Wiggins.

"To see power boats going down the street, and to see people walking in waist deep water holding children. Everything I see now on the television – it's just breathtaking, and I thank God that we made it through." ✈

"I had been through hurricanes as a child growing up in New Orleans, but never anything like this as an adult."

Bayou Reflections

David Westbrook is a controller at the Dallas Fort Worth TRACON. For 10 days, he volunteered at the New Orleans Louis B. Armstrong International Airport Tower to help his former coworkers after Hurricane Katrina. Following are excerpts from a diary he kept. It was edited for content and space.

Friday, Sept. 16

This Friday night finds me preparing for bed in our new home lovingly referred to as “Cellblock MSY.” It’s a seven-by-seven foot cubicle resembling an Amtrak sleeper compartment. Compared with the evacuees and military personnel temporarily housed in the terminal, my quarters are spacious and luxurious. We are not allowed outside the facility gates except to venture – escorted – through the airport parking garage to the food trailer. This creates cabin fever, but considering the increasingly toxic biohazard surrounding the greater New Orleans area, we’re finding ways to pass the time. Most often, this involves wearing a headset and talking to airplanes.



David Westbrook

Flying Out, First Impressions

Two other controllers and I flew out of Fort Worth’s Meachum Airport last Sunday morning aboard the FAA’s King Air to New Orleans. As we descended over the swamps west of the airport, Katrina’s damage was obvious: twisted railroad tracks that had fallen from

Bayou Reflections

collapsed trestles, large fallen trees and freeway signs torn and tossed blocks away.

On the terminal ramp we came into a scene that prompted our FAA pilot to whisper, “this reminds me so much of Vietnam.” There were giant military transport aircraft occupying every quadrant of the airport accompanied by the constant sound of helicopter rotors making hurried runs to and from the flooded areas of the city in a time-critical effort to rescue survivors from flooded homes.

Most activity took place at the Delta Concourse, a terminal section I know well. But this time it was different. There were five or six baggage carts attached to one tug carrying injured and ill patients to waiting C-130s for medical evacuation. A shorter train carried a much different “cargo” past the med evacs on to waiting refrigerated trucks near the freight

*On the terminal ramp,
we came into a scene that
prompted our FAA pilot to
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ramp. It was heartbreaking. As I followed the security personnel to the tower transport van, I realized this stuff looks better on CNN than in person.

The next few hours were a whirlwind. Setting up cots, getting “re-certified” on all tower and radar positions (I hadn’t forgotten as much as I thought) and getting our feet wet working an extremely high volume of transports into MSY and New Orleans Callender Naval Air Station.

There was a huge volume of rescue helicopters between the city and airport.

Bayou Reflections

Six helicopters were consistently offloading patients and evacuees, then rapidly departing the “triage” helipad while another six were simultaneously touching down to replace the departures. At the same time, more helicopters were reporting two miles east of the airport inbound for landing and flying parallel to yet another six copters that had just left and returning to the city.

Despite the frenetic activity, we only had a couple helicopters go down during the rescue and recovery operations. Most were because of mechanical reasons with only minor injuries. Hundreds of helicopter operations an hour with a dedicated crew busting their butts from sunrise to sunset; making a difference, saving lives, flying safe and not a complaint from anyone.

View of New Orleans

At midnight, the view from the tower cab was a sea of darkness punctuated only by the occasional flashes from emergency vehicle lights near the Superdome and central business district. The terminal ramps were empty of the usual overnight jetliners and the only movement was military vehicles and medical personnel. It was both a sad and surreal view of a once great city.

Final Thoughts

Working at MSY again is a strangely happy experience under the circumstances. It’s like a family reunion of sorts, a reminder of some of the happiest years of my personal and professional life. And in the middle of this devastation and despair, I find smiles, hope, and a strong belief in New Orleans’ resurrection. I’m starting to believe, too. ✈

The Last Payday

October 11 will be like any other payday for most FAA employees. But for a group of 119 employees at the Mike Monroney Aeronautical Center and Southern Region headquarters, it will pass as a bittersweet day.

That day will mark the last time these employees process FAA paychecks. On October 16, the Department of the Interior will take over payroll services for the agency in a consolidation mandated by the President's Management Agenda. "The federal government doesn't need 22 separate payroll systems," said Mike Upton, the center's director of financial services. "If you'd step back a few paces, you'll see it makes economic sense. I feel the DOT should have been selected to be one of the few surviving providers, but that did not happen."

Employees recently looked back at the last few decades and at a job that, as Upton put it, "has 50,000 auditors." Virginia Rackley, a 17-year member of the staff, noted: "You held these people's lives in your hands. These people are my responsibility."

Rackley and her coworkers' jobs are not simply clerical. "We don't just do data entry," noted Doris Thurmond, who has been with payroll since FAA took over the service 25 years ago. "Over the years, [the job] changed dramatically."

There were constant adjustments to salary structures — often last minute — due to new labor agreements or changes in laws. "It's just so detailed because I work on back pay . . . you have to really dig into all areas of [employees] records to make sure everything is correct," said Janice Harper, a payroll systems specialist in the Atlanta office.



Among the Aeronautical Center payroll staff are Virginia Rackley (from left), GiGi Wissler, Sonny Rogers, and Darice Cook. Seated is Doris Thurmond.

The Last Payday

FAA provided payroll services to other agencies, including the Coast Guard, the DOT's Inspector General's Office and RSPA. Then, of course, there was the advent of the Transportation Security Administration, whose payroll FAA serviced after it was first formed.

Suddenly, there were 65,000 new paychecks to process, with up to 10,000 new hires added to each pay period. It was the straw that might have broken the camel's back. "We worked from 6 a.m. to midnight," recalled Darice Cook, a 17-year veteran. The pressure was so great she remembered coworkers going for long walks to relieve the stress and crying in the parking lot. That pace continued for about four months before additional staff was brought in.

Harper found the hardest part of her job was "accepting that there are so many different personalities. You have employees calling irate. Other people call who are so sweet it almost makes you sick," she chuckled.

Carolyn Hacker has the tight-lipped demeanor of one who has had to bite her tongue and watch every word for 19 years. Hacker handled employees

who'd had their paychecks garnished for arrears in child support payments, divorce settlements and tax liens. "I'll take their whole check," she said with a resigned air. She also heard threats. "I catch heck from every region we service here," Hacker said.

There was the unrelenting pace of finalizing payroll every other week. "You plan your vacation around payroll," said Rackley.

Considering the volume, mistakes were inevitable. "I accidentally killed a guy," recalled Sonny Rogers, referring to an unfortunate data entry mistake that changed a very live employee's status to deceased. A wrong code changed the W-2 addresses for 18 employees, sending one W-2 to a new house that hadn't been built yet. But mistakes were rare and quickly rectified.

"There's a lot of interaction with employees. It's the type of job you fall in love with," said Cook. While there are regrets about breaking up the payroll team, the pride of a job well done remains. "We have tried to the very best of our ability and we we've had a great time doing it," said Hacker. ✈

Security Drives Change

Issue 14 » October 11, 2005

Page 15

Employee identification tags will take on a different look in the coming months as FAA issues newly designed and technically upgraded ID tags for everyone in the agency. Beginning Oct. 27, a new procedure for the issuing of cards will also be implemented. These changes respond to a presidential directive to establish a common ID standard for all federal employees and contractors.

To help meet this mandate, the Office of Security and Hazardous Materials will change the way it issues ID cards and deploy a Web-based identification media system (IMS) to ensure compliance with the directive. The IMS uses a single database replacing the multiple ID card systems currently used around the country.

"This is a great security protector for our employees," says Barbara Bilodeau, FAA's national program manager for the implementation of the directive and the IMS project. When fully implemented, the IMS will provide FAA with a standard, secure, and reliable form of personal identification. Many of the changes will be transparent to current employees and will only affect new hires.

See a profile of FAA's security employees in the article "Eye on Security" under People in this issue.

The Office of Security and Hazardous Materials is working with the Department of Transportation to minimize the affect on employees. However, some changes will occur.

The biggest change will affect the hiring process and the standards for issuing cards to new employees and contractors. To implement the new process, employees will now have to wait until the FBI fingerprint check is completed before the ID card is issued.

To ensure FAA employees and management are aware of the new mandate, the Office of Security and Hazardous Materials has begun briefing regional and center management team members. Eastern Region and Great Lakes Region have already been briefed. The remaining regions and service areas will be briefed over the next several months. ✈

Payroll Shift Coming

The transition of payroll services from FAA to the Department of Interior (DOI) occurs Oct. 16.

Overall, the transition should be fairly transparent to FAA employees, but there will be a few noticeable changes. Consultation/negotiations have been initiated with labor unions for changes that affect bargaining unit employees and those changes will be implemented after completion of bargaining.

It is important that all employees save their last DOT-issued leave and earnings statement. This provides a record for them if any discrepancies should occur during the transition.

Leave and earnings statements initially will be sent to each employee's address as it appears on their W-2 form. They no longer will be distributed at work.

After DOI issues its first two paychecks on Nov. 8 and 22, employees may opt to access electronic leave and earnings statements via Employee Express or continue to receive paper statements. A sample of the DOI hardcopy statement and Employee Express version can be viewed at <http://payroll.dot.gov/cups/html/fppshome.html>. Click on the FAA logo, then on "Employees."

The amount on an employee's paycheck might vary slightly

*Bid adieu
to FAA's
payroll
services
employees in
the article
"The Last
Payday"
under People
in this issue.*

Payroll Shift Coming

from previous paychecks because DOI's rounding practices and application of regulations are slightly different from those used by DOT's payroll office. In most cases, the differences will amount to a few cents.

The information on the Employee Express and DOI leave and earnings statements will be different from information on FAA statements. Keep in mind that when DOI takes over tracking of retirement and TSP contributions, the cumulative balances reflected on the DOI leave and earnings statement will start at zero. The Office of Personnel Management keeps

track of total contributions made to the retirement fund and the Thrift Savings Board keeps track of contributions made to the TSP accounts throughout an employee's career. All records of retirement contributions made by DOT as the FAA's payroll provider will be turned over to the Office of Personnel Management.

By early December, paper leave and earnings statements will be discontinued for non-bargaining unit employees and as negotiated with labor unions for bargaining unit employees. Employee Express will be the exclusive method available to view and/or

print leave and earnings statements.

Employees who were on board prior to the October 16 migration will receive two W-2s next year, one each from the DOT and DOI since each issued paychecks to FAA employees during the tax year. ✈

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ATO Job Fairs Are A Hit

Issue 14 » October 11, 2005

Page 18

The FAA tomorrow will complete a series of job fairs in Kansas City, Mo., aimed at recruiting candidates for air traffic controller training.

More than 400 applicants out of thousands who attended the fairs will be chosen to take the Air Traffic selection and training test that qualifies them for training at the FAA Academy (for a related story on controller training, see "Controller Training Blitz" under "News" in the next issue). The tests are conducted two-to-six weeks after the fair.

The FAA estimates it will have to hire 12,500 new controllers over the next 10 years to keep up with the attrition rate. In the past, FAA has filled the controller pipeline with graduates from authorized college aviation programs and the military.

Recently, however, Human Resources and the Air Traffic Organization broadened the pool and began recruiting the public to fill 'hard to staff' en route centers. Fairs in Oakland, Albuquerque, Palmdale, Calif., Indianapolis and Kansas City brought out a groundswell of people who want to be air traffic controllers.

Applicants had the opportunity to talk with controllers from each en route center about their jobs. Attendees were asked to complete a survey to help assess the effectiveness of the fairs.

Ernesto Rodriguez, a supervisor at the Albuquerque Tower, said more than 1,100 people filed into the hotel hosting the FAA job fair. Rodriguez was active in promoting the job fair to the Hispanic community in Albuquerque.



Applicants line up to speak with FAA recruiters at Albuquerque job fair.

ATO Job Fairs Are A Hit

Issue 14 » October 11, 2005

Page 19

"There aren't a lot of opportunities out here like an FAA air traffic controller job, so I contacted everyone in New Mexico and Texas to make sure everyone knew about the opportunity," he said. Rodriguez reached out to community colleges and universities, news network affiliates, chambers of commerce, the NAACP, and even worked out a free public service announcement.

"It was great talking to the recruits. Being an air traffic controller is quite a career and one that pays an impressive salary within three years. But when those people walk through these doors they should know they have to work hard, never stop learning and prove yourself an asset. Always."

"Seeing a roomful of hundreds of under thirty-somethings brought back a lot of memories for me, said Pete Nyquist, a controller at the Los Angeles Center, who staffed the Palmdale job fair. A controller for 30 years, Nyquist said that in many

ways, today's controllers have better equipment and more advanced tools for safety redundancy.

"When you reflect back on how things change, these kids definitely have an easier time of it. Not that long ago, there was no digital radar. Instead of tracking blips on a radar screen, you had a map where you moved little pieces of plastic, called "shrimp boats," said Nyquist. "You had to remember the positions and imagine the altitudes as they climbed. There was no direct communication with the pilot. You used telephones and radio to communicate with airline dispatchers, controllers in airport towers, and airway radio operators, who relayed instructions and weather information to pilots." ✈

Your Two Cents

Feedback

With the build-up and fallout from Hurricanes Katrina and Rita still dominating the news, we feature two stories from FAA employees who had first-hand — albeit radically different — points of view of New Orleans after the storm.

Controller David Westbrook volunteered to return to New Orleans where he worked for years to help handle rescue/emergency flights into and out of the city. Claudette Wiggins spent 1 1/2 days in the Superdome with her ailing mother and father. She provides a first-hand view of the harrowing stories we have heard on the news.

Email your stories to jim.tise@faa.gov.



What About Us?

I noted the current issue of AOA Highlights contains links to information about labor negotiations with both NATCA and PASS. When will the FAA openly admit its failure to apply even a modicum of standardization to its efforts in resolving all of its labor contracts?

As a member of a bargaining unit [Professional Association of Aeronautical Center Employees] whose contract could have, and should have, been resolved at the beginning of fiscal year 1999, it is quite discouraging to see that yet again, there is acknowledgement of the on-going NATCA and PASS situation, without even a hint at what is going on with regards to any other contracts.

If those of you responsible for providing open communication within the agency continue to turn a blind eye to these other cases, then where will the agency ever find any impetus to resolve them? I predict that, absent even a token effort to report their status, these other

Your Two Cents

contract negotiations will continue to languish well beyond the point where both NATCA and PASS will have their next contracts in place.

Meanwhile, my own bargaining unit has been without a new agreement for seven years, and has no hope of ever seeing any meaningful attempt by the FAA to achieve a mutually acceptable resolution. We’ve seen the signing of one NATCA contract, the signing of a two-year extension of the NATCA contract, and now regular efforts by the FAA to initiate talks about their next contract. Bravo, and more power to everyone for all of those things. Now, why doesn’t anyone want to admit that the reason there are, to quote the administrator, “no firsts among equals,” is that some of us are definitely not considered to be an “equal.”

Larry Shaver

Mike Monroney

Aeronautical Center

Rita Recovery

I am two floors below ground in the Texas State Operations Center

working Rita recovery. I haven’t seen the sun since I drove into Austin. I miss home! We are doing good work for Texas and being a Texan makes it a lot easier to work so hard and under such stress.

When I arrived I was asked by the senior FEMA official to work directly with [Texas] to expedite federal transportation resources as they were identified and needed by the state. Within two days, a FEMA federal coordinating officer, Scott Wells, was also placed to work directly with the state. We both collaborated on needs and requirements to assure quick identification and contracting of resources, such as aircraft for pre-landfall evacuation. We also tasked ambulances and buses to meet ground evacuation and post-landfall relocation needs, and help with commodity priorities.

One human-interest item: I contracted and set up the shelter coordination for several flights out of Houston to El Paso, Amarillo and Lubbock. One of those flights had sixty special-needs patients from a nursing home in Baytown. One of those evacuees was my great aunt, who has Alzheimer’s and doesn’t even know she is now in Lubbock. It is a small world, isn’t it?

Don Day

Southwest Region



Your Two Cents

King Airs To The Rescue



An agency King Air at New Orleans' international airport, in front of a stream of relief helicopters.

The FAA Flight Program Office began its recovery operation for Hurricanes Katrina and Rita on August 31. FAA's King Air fleet and pilots from the Southwest, Eastern, Central, Southern, and Western-Pacific regions flew one to five round trips a day from the Fort Worth, Texas, base to New Orleans, Baton Rouge, and Gulfport, Miss., after Hurricane Katrina. The flights transported about 165 employees and more than 7,100 pounds of cargo and supplies. Equipment and cargo included food, water, supplies, bedding, payroll (for FAAers in the affected areas), and specialized NAS equipment and repair tools. The aircraft were also used for aerial surveys of affected air carrier and general aviation airports to assess damage for emergency airport grants. The King Air support ended Sept. 30.

Oops!

The article ["Tech Ops Prep Saves Day" in the Sept. 13 issue] said a "A crew out of Atlanta arrived and rebuilt three localizers — part of the ILS navigation aid — in a week, a process that normally takes two weeks." The reality is, when done under the normal process, it takes a minimum of two months to build just one localizer.

Kevin Bittinger
Southern Region

Two Rocks, A Pencil And Some String

Immediately after the hurricane struck Gulfport, I volunteered to go help. The reasons were simple. First, the destruction was so severe to the area and the personnel there had more on their minds then having to go to work. Second, I had worked at Gulfport ATCT in the past and felt that my services could be of use. I knew the airport and local area and believed that would be a benefit. Also, I have a motor home, so I had my own sleeping facilities, kitchen, bath, etc. and would not need to worry about those things. I, along with Gary Hatcher, departed Birmingham at 7:30 p.m. on the Friday after Katrina came ashore. We met up with

Your Two Cents

Gene Ernst, the Montgomery ATCT manager, in Montgomery that night and continued on to Mobile where we stopped at 2 a.m. We wanted to make our arrival at first light so we departed Mobile at 5 a.m. and arrived at Gulfport ATCT at 6 a.m.

On arrival we checked out the control tower and were greatly surprised, and extremely impressed, with how much repair work had already been completed on the tower by the Tech Ops and AF people. Chuck Murphy and his group are really some outstanding and impressive people. The decision was made to open the tower at 2 p.m. Sunday, to give Chuck and his people 24 more hours to get even more of the equipment back up. After seeing what they had done, I believe they can build a tower with two rocks, a pencil, and some string.

Sunday, at 2 p.m., we started providing service. The helicopter traffic was extremely heavy while the fixed-wing traffic was moderate. The fixed-wing traffic that was coming in was every type of cargo aircraft the military has in its inventory.

For the next week the traffic volume was very busy with the relief effort. During this time, two new ILS and a temporary VORTAC were installed and flight checked, along with more equipment repairs to the facility. The traffic slowed down the

“...they had not seen this kind of camaraderie since they were in the military...”

second week and became more fixed-wing then helicopters. At the end of the second week all the volunteers departed for their home facilities.

As more then one person put it, they had not seen this kind of camaraderie since they were in the military, and it sure was good to see it and experience it again. Gene Ernst, the Montgomery ATCT manager and Robert Parker, a supervisor from Memphis ATCT, did an outstanding job.

Mike Grosse
Southern Region



Your Two Cents

Nice Job

Continental Airlines sent the following letter to DOT Secretary Norman Y. Mineta from their CEO, Lawrence W. Kellmer. At right is a copy of the letter, below is the full text.

Dear Norm, Maria, and Marion,

I just wanted to say thank you for the enormous efforts of your department/agency during Hurricane Rita. Not only was the DOT/FAA able to accomplish everything we requested in record speed, they were creative and innovative in coming up with good ideas that truly made a difference. At every level, your team was available and ready to react night and day -- even on issues outside your department. They were thinking ahead and anticipating problems from the start -- and making early arrangements to keep our operation running as smoothly as possible under the circumstances. All of us at Continental are truly grateful for the support we received.

At Continental, we pride ourselves on “working together” as a team. Our employees are truly honored to have worked together with the excellent DOT and FAA team. Please extend our thanks to the liter-



Letter from Continental Airlines to DOT Secretary Norman Y. Mineta

ally hundreds of DOT and FAA staff who dedicated their efforts to keeping our transportation system working through this hurricane. Their dedication and commitment touched thousands of Continental employees and customers' lives.

With Best Wishes,
Larry

BEYOND THE PALE



Gerald E. Lavey

is an interesting expression that has its origins in geography, referring to a stake, or fences made of stakes, to form enclosures to keep people in or out. Perhaps the most notable examples were the Russian Pale and the Irish Pale. Only later did the expression come to mean “outside the bounds of acceptable behavior.”

That expression came to mind recently as I was listening to some of the rhetoric flying back and forth in the current labor/management negotiations. Let’s be clear: labor/management negotiations are not for the faint of heart. Tough language is part of the game as each side tries to put the best face on its proposals. So, we’re not suggesting that the two sides play nice. Negotiations are a contact sport.

Going into negotiations, you can count on two things: management is hoping to get

Now This

a contract that will help accomplish the mission at the best cost – not necessarily the lowest cost, but the best cost. Labor, on the other hand, hopes to get a contract that accomplishes the mission while increasing its members' benefits, which usually means more money and a shorter workweek. That's what management and labor do. No surprise there.

However, what has always bound FAA management and labor together, despite their differences, is safety. There should be no disagreement on that point — and historically there hasn't been. So, when you see one side playing the “safety card” as a scare tactic to get attention during the negotiating process, it makes you stand up and cry foul. To suggest that management is putting safety at risk just to save money, as the union has done, is beyond the pale. It would be

just as reprehensible if management were to suggest that the union is not interested in safety, only in getting more money and a shorter workweek. Neither side should question the other's commitment to safety.

If either side has legitimate safety concerns, then it has the obligation to bring that to the attention of the appropriate authorities — PR Newswire.com is not one of them — and do it quickly. Otherwise, leave it alone. In the “spin” game, which both sides play, there are some things one should not be willing to do just to get the upper hand. And safety is one of them. ✈

Gerald E. Lavey

*Deputy Assistant Administrator for
Internal Communications.*

AOA HIGHLIGHTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Note: Please keep in mind that links to some outside publications mentioned in AOA Highlights work for only a few days and after that many publications no longer provide free access.

They Never Lost Their Focus:

The smooth transition of flight services to private sector is a tribute to the specialists and their managers, says Administrator.

FAA Will Stand Tall Through It All:

Blakey thanks employees for their response to hurricanes.

Mineta Defends DOT Response to Hurricanes:

Secretary Mineta came to the defense of DOT in House hearing.

EEO Award Winners Celebrated:

“EEO needs to be the thing that happens with such routine that you don’t know what it’s like not to have it.” — Marion Blakey

Safety Forum to Draw World Aviation Leaders:

FAA/ATA to co-host 2nd Annual International Aviation Safety Forum.

Cirillo Featured in Webcast Interview:

Mike Cirillo, ATO VP for System Operations Services, discusses the job, status of the ATO transition, and the challenge of juggling work and family obligations.

The Last Word:

Conventional wisdom so often is the product of sloppy or self-interested thinking. Its biggest

drawback is that often it’s not true.

They Never Lost Their

Focus: Tuesday, October 4, at 12:01 a.m., the responsibility for flight services transitioned seamlessly from the public sector to contractor Lockheed Martin. Most customers didn’t notice a difference because services are still provided by the same facilities and by many of the same employees. The employees are just now wearing a different badge.

In an 800 broadcast message this week (1-800-322-6397, access code 51), the Administrator had this to say “about our brothers

AOA HIGHLIGHTS

and sisters” in the Flight Service organization who transitioned to Lockheed Martin this week: “The transition went smoothly, as expected, and so much of the credit for that goes to the flight service specialists and their managers themselves. I can’t say enough about their professionalism and dedication, not just during the transition but also during the months leading up to this point.

“As you know, the A-76 process goes back two years and has been unsettling for many of the specialists, their managers, and families. First, not knowing how it was going to turn out. And then, when they did find out, actually making the

psychological transition. During it all, they never lost their focus on the job at hand – service to the aviation community.

“I saw them in action during my visits to facilities during the past couple of years. I saw them perform at Oshkosh during the air shows. I saw them perform during Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. And throughout them all, they performed like the real champions of safety they are.

“At Oshkosh, it was touching to see them proudly displaying banners proclaiming their 85 years of service to the aviation community. Their proud history will continue but under a different banner. On behalf of

the entire FAA family, I want to extend grateful appreciation for all they have done over the years.”

(FYI: Last week, a District Court judge dismissed a last-minute request for a preliminary injunction. The plaintiffs appealed the judge’s decision and the Circuit court rejected the union’s appeal.)

FAA Will Stand Tall Through It All:

Last week, the Administrator also [sent a message to employees](#) thanking them for their extraordinary response to Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. See excerpts:

“Day in and day out, FAA employees make the extraordinary seem ordinary. But, occasionally, they achieve

AOA HIGHLIGHTS

a level of performance that is truly phenomenal, and we have witnessed that again over the last few weeks in the FAA's response to Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. Never have I been so proud and honored to be part of this organization."

"Over the next few months, there will be hearings and reports on what government did and did not do well in response to the hurricanes. Regardless of the result, I am confident the FAA will stand tall through it all. The agency was prepared well in advance and our employees performed like champions."

Mineta Defends DOT Response to Hurricane: The Secretary [testified last week](#) before

a House Appropriations subcommittee, defending DOT's response to Hurricane Katrina. From the testimony, you can get a sense for what DOT as whole does in response to crises like these. Here is an excerpt from the testimony where the Secretary talks about the roles of the various DOT modal administrations, including FAA:

"With respect to recovery, DOT oversees federal infrastructure programs, which support the rebuilding of highway, bridge and airport assets from damage due to an event like Katrina. Our Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) administers the Emergency Relief program, which

provides reimbursement to states for expenses related to highway infrastructure damage. FHWA works closely with state departments of transportation and Federal Land Management Agencies to quickly assess damage and facilitate the necessary repairs. Examples of the type of work eligible for Emergency Relief program reimbursement include repairing pavements, shoulders, slopes, embankments, guard rails, signs, traffic control devices, and bridges, and removing debris from the highway rights-of-way. The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has similar authority to help rebuild airport

AOA HIGHLIGHTS

infrastructure under its Airport Improvement Program (AIP). In addition, the FAA also is responsible for restoring air traffic control capabilities to facilitate the rapid resumption of flights into and out of the affected region.

“DOT also uses its expertise in other modes of transportation to help port authorities, transit agencies, and private rail and pipeline operators assess damage to their infrastructure, identify specific needs, and restore service to their customers.”

EEO Award Winners Celebrated: Administrator Blakey was the keynote speaker last week at the 28th Annual Administrator’s Awards Ceremony for Excellence

in Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO). She got everyone’s attention when she stated at the outset: “What I want most of all is never to have to attend this ceremony again.” After a long pause, she explained that she wants an environment so equal for everyone at the FAA “that we don’t have to have a ceremony to talk about the people who worked to make it that way. I want equal opportunity to be a reflex.... EEO needs to be the thing that happens with such routine that you don’t know what it’s like not to have it.” But, until it does become routine, she added, “so much a part of our life and the way we work that we don’t need it as a goal ... we’ll

keep celebrating these achievements.”

In the category of EEO Excellence, there were two individual and three team winners: Mel Banks, ATO, Great Lakes Region; Jamaal Libscomb, ATO, William J. Hughes Technical Center; Mary Ann Keller, Technical Women’s Organization President, and Patty Swenor, Past President of the Professional Women Controllers, both from ATO; the Rio Grande System Management Team, ATO, Southwest Region and the Diversity Council at the Technical Center.

The EEO Manager of the Year is Lowell H. Johnson, Airports

AOA HIGHLIGHTS

Division Manager, Northwest Mountain Region, and the Civil Rights Employee of the Year is Samuel L. Wilson, People with Disabilities Program Manager, William J. Hughes Technical Center. We'll have more on all of these winners in an upcoming Focus FAA.

FAA Safety Conference to Draw World Aviation Leaders:

The FAA and the Air Transport Association (ATA) are co-hosting the [2nd Annual International Aviation Safety Forum](#), October 19-21, here in the Washington area.

The forum provides the opportunity for industry executives, senior government officials, and global aviation leaders to exchange safety risk

management information. One of the great benefits of forum in a global aviation environment is that it promotes partnerships and shared approaches to common problems. Secretary Mineta is participating in the forum, along with Administrator Blakey. Last year's forum was regarded as highly successful. Here's this year's [agenda](#).

Cirillo Featured in Webcast

Interview: Mike Cirillo, ATO Vice President for System Operations Services, is the guest in this week's [webcast interview](#). He discusses the role of System Operation and how it relates to the Terminal, Enroute, and Oceanic domains. He also

discusses the role System Operations played in FAA's handling of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita and the challenges of accommodating innovations, such as Required Navigation Performance, into the National Airspace System. He provides a personal perspective on how the ATO transition is going and, last but not least, he discusses the challenges of juggling work and family life — in his case, finding quality time for his wife and four boys, ages 22 to 6.

The Last Word: Back for a moment to the bestseller Freakonomics, which we alluded to last time.

AOA HIGHLIGHTS

Instead of reading it straight through, I pick out a chapter with a fetching title and start grazing. The chapter headings are real grabbers, so you hardly know where to start. Here are some examples: “What do Schoolteachers and Sumo Wrestlers Have in Common?” “How is the Ku Klux Klan Like a Group of Real-Estate Agents?” Or, better yet: “Why Do Drug Dealers Still Live with Their Moms?” The purpose of the book is to get readers to re-examine and rethink the “conventional wisdom” that rules so much of our lives.

According to the authors Steven D. Levitt and Stephen J. Dubner, the

noted economist, John Kenneth Galbraith, coined the term “conventional wisdom,” and he did not consider it a compliment. So much of conventional wisdom is convenient, comfortable, and comforting, Galbraith said, but not necessarily true. The authors contend that “working together, journalists and experts are the architects of much conventional wisdom. Journalists need experts as badly as experts need journalists. Every day there are newspaper pages and television newscasts to be filled, and an expert who can deliver a jarring piece of wisdom is always welcome.”

Departing from the book for a moment, I

reflected on how much “conventional wisdom” there is at FAA about any number of issues. Much of it has hardened over the years — whether it be about labor or management, this LOB versus that, or this person or that person. So much of it goes unchallenged and so much of it is dead wrong and unfair. Yet, to a great extent, it rules our lives and behaviors. Socrates said the unexamined life is not worth living and, like so many other things, he got that right, too. ✈

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Deviations

Issue 14 » October 11, 2005

Page 33

Why are you so upset, Bilber?
The wing is up in the tree
and the plane still **flies**!!

Where is the other **wing**?!



Wrong Brothers invent the worlds first **single** wing airplane